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CRAIG WIGHTMAN
1234 COUNTY HIGHWAY 23
RICHFIELD SPRINGS NY 13439

COPY MAILED

NOV 23 2004

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Craig Wightman :
Application No. 10/625,473 : ON PETITION
Filed: 23 July, 2003 :
For: Attachment for a Plow :

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a),¹ to revive the above-identified application unavoidably abandoned, filed on 21 September, 2004.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." Or, as explained herein, under 37 CFR 1.137(b). This is not a final agency decision.

¹A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed; In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional utility or plant application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1);

(3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c)).

This application became abandoned on 3 February, 2003, for failure to timely reply to the Notice to File Missing Parts of Nonprovisional Application mailed on 2 December, 2003, which set a two (2) month shortened period for reply. No extensions of the time for reply in accordance with 37 CFR 1.136(a) were obtained. The filing of the present petition precedes the mailing of Notice of Abandonment.

Petitioner, *pro se*, asserts that his registered patent attorney, Donald J. Perrault, informed him in May, 2004, that he would no longer represent JGB Enterprises (JGB), petitioner's business partner, due to nonpayment of legal fees. Petitioner asserts that Perrault informed him that the patent was in jeopardy of abandonment, but would not explain what action was needed to avoid abandonment because JGB, not petitioner, was his client.

Petitioner further states that he then contacted the Office of Initial Patent Examination (OIPE) and was instructed that the filing fee and surcharge for its late filing were due. On 24 March, 2004, petitioner filed the basic filing fee and surcharge and a petition to waive the extension of time fees. The petition was dismissed on 3 August, 2004, because the extendable time period had expired, and an extension was no longer possible. It was additionally noted that an executed oath or declaration was required.

On 21 September, 2004, the present petition was filed, accompanied by an executed declaration. Petitioner asserts unavoidable delay in that he was never informed that an oath or declaration was due.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed; In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1);

(3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR

1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c)).

The petition lacks item (3).

With regard to item (3), the petition lacks the required showing of unavoidable delay under 37 CFR 1.137(a). Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.²

At the outset, petitioner has not explained the relationship between petitioner and attorney Perrault. Petitioner may wish to send a letter, certified mail, return receipt requested, to attorney Perrault explaining that the Office is investigating the circumstances of the abandonment of this application, and requesting Perrault explain the nature of his agreement with petitioner, and to explain why he (Perrault) did not explain to petitioner, upon petitioner's inquiry, what reply was required to avoid abandonment of the application. A copy of this decision should accompany petitioner's request. Petitioner should request a reply within (1) month. Any reply should be submitted with a renewed petition. If no reply is received, petitioner should so state in any renewed petition.

²In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912) (quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

Further, while the extent of the relationship between petitioner and Perrault has not been explained, petitioner is also reminded that the Patent and Trademark Office is not the proper forum for resolving a dispute between petitioner and petitioner's representative.³ Moreover, the Patent and Trademark Office must rely on the actions or inactions of duly authorized and voluntarily chosen representatives of the applicant, and petitioner is bound by the consequences of those actions or inactions.⁴ Specifically, petitioner's delay caused by the mistakes or negligence of his voluntarily chosen representative does not constitute unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. 133 or 37 CFR 1.137(a).⁵

With regards to OIPE's alleged failure to notify petitioner that the oath or declaration was missing and required, petitioner is not entitled to rely upon oral advice from the Office. A delay resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP does not constitute an "unavoidable" delay.⁶ A delay caused by an applicant's lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP is not rendered "unavoidable" due to: (1) the applicant's reliance upon oral advice from Office employees; or (2) the Office's failure to advise the applicant of any deficiency in sufficient time to permit the applicant to take corrective action.⁷

While the showing of record is unfortunate, it does not rise to the level of unfortunate delay. As such, the petition must be dismissed.

³Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608-09, 34 USPQ2d 1786, 1787 (Fed. Cir. 1995).

⁴Link v. Wabash, 370 U.S. 626, 633-34 (1962); Huston v. Ladner, 973 F.2d 1564, 1567, 23 USPQ2d 1910, 1913 (Fed. Cir. 1992); see also Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (D.N. Ind. 1987).

⁵Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (D. Ind. 1987); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (Comm'r Pat. 1891).

⁶See Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (N.D. Ind. 1987); Vincent v. Mossinghoff, 230 USPQ 621, 624 (D.D.C. 1985); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (1891).

⁷See In re Sivertz, 227 USPQ 255, 256 (Comm'r Pat. 1985); see also In re Colombo, Inc., 33 USPQ2d 1530, 1532 (Comm'r Pat. 1994) (while the Office attempts to notify applicants of deficiencies in their responses in a manner permitting a timely correction, the Office has no obligation to notify parties of deficiencies in their responses in a manner permitting a timely correction).

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Petitioner may wish to consider filing a renewed petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b),⁸ which now provides that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b).

The filing of a petition under the unintentional standard cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore should be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay cannot make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.137(b).

A copy of the form for filing a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive an application unintentionally abandoned is enclosed herewith for petitioner's convenience.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

⁸Effective December 1, 1997, the provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b) now provide that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b). A grantable petition filed under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional utility or plant application filed on or after 8 June, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(m);

(3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c)).

By mail: Mail Stop Petition
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX: (703)872-9306
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
220 20th Street S.
Customer Window, Mail Stop Petition
Crystal Plaza Two, Lobby, Room 1B03
Arlington, VA 22202

Telephone inquiries concerning this matter may be directed to the undersigned at (571)272-3231.



Douglas I. Wood
Senior Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions

Enclosures: Form PTO/SB/64
Fee Schedule FY05
Privacy Act Notification Form